

**Idaho Fish and Game Commission  
Special Meeting  
June 13, 2005**

**MISCELLANEOUS**

Chairman Marc Gibbs called the meeting to order at 8:05 a.m. with Commissioners Hadley, Power, Watts, Wheeler, Wright, and staff present.

**South Fork Salmon River Summer Chinook Salmon Season (Appendix 38, Exhibit 63)**

Sharon Kiefer, Anadromous Fish Manager, briefed the Commission on the spring and summer Chinook salmon run. There has been some improvement from the April/May forecast. The current forecast as of June 7 is 28,000 spring and summer Chinook crossing Lower Granite Dam, of which 9,000 are expected to be unclipped, mostly natural spring and summer Chinook. This compares with a 10-year average of 44,000 and last year's run of 65,000.

The forecast for McCall hatchery surplus for all fisheries (state and tribal) is 1,200 – 2,400. Staff is continuing to update and refine this number. By the time the fishery initiates, staff will have a better sense of the estimate of harvestable share. The Department expects a very small incidental take of 17 ESA mortalities for the state fishery.

Ms. Kiefer also briefed the Commission on the ongoing spring Chinook seasons. Staff expects closure of the mainstem and North Fork of the Clearwater River on June 14. Harvest data will determine season continuation in the South Fork of the Clearwater and Lochsa Rivers. The Upper Snake River fishery closes June 19, and harvest from June 10-13 will determine season continuation in the lower Salmon and Little Salmon River fisheries.

Staff recommendation for the South Fork Salmon River summer Chinook fishery is to adopt the rules in the original "Idaho 2005 Spring Chinook Salmon Seasons and Rules" pamphlet modifying the area open for fishing and the season dates.

The area open for fishing would be the mainstem South Fork Salmon River from the mouth of Goat Creek upstream to a posted boundary approximately 100 yards downstream from the South Fork Salmon River salmon weir and trap.

Staff recommends a season to initiate Friday June 17 until further notice or July 31, whichever comes first. Staff believes that due to the low hatchery harvest share and low incidental take limit, the fishery is unlikely to last through the July 4 holiday. They can't predict an exact closure date and thus are using the default closure date with plans to keep the public up to speed on a daily basis on the status of harvest share and incidental take.

Staff recommends daily fishing based on the fishing pattern, run timing, and opportunity. Staff proposes the same limits that are currently in place for spring Chinook – a daily limit of 1, possession of 3, and a cumulative statewide limit of 10. This achieves consistent possession limits statewide.

Chairman Gibbs asked if the run is actually large enough to warrant a season. Ms. Kiefer explained that the proposed 2005 season is similar to the 2000 season and would provide a welcome opportunity for anglers.

Commissioner Watts asked if it might be better to move the date closer to July 4 if there is no likelihood of reaching July 31. The Director noted that it was possible to set an opening date and leave the closing date “until further notice.” The Director was hesitant to give a target closing date and then disappoint people by not meeting that target.

Commissioner Watts also asked Ms. Kiefer to explain why the public can’t fish on certain portions of the South Fork while the tribe is allowed. She explained that the Department has chosen to emphasize the upper South Fork, which is where the majority of hatchery fish are holding. Lower down, hatchery fish are passing quickly, and there is a high incidental take of wild fish because that is where they are holding to spawn. The lower part of river is governed by a different set of incidental take limits that are extremely constrained, and there would be little to no opportunity there, which would then subtract from opportunity in the upper river.

Chairman Gibbs asked that the Department use the press to help in making the public aware that the season will be brief. The Director added that public information efforts should emphasize that there is a low quota of wild fish and proportion of the run. Commissioners agreed that it was important to advertise that it would be a short season.

05-41 Commissioner Watts moved and Commissioner Hadley seconded **TO ACCEPT STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE SALMON FISHING SEASON EXCEPT FOR THE SOUTH FORK OF THE SALMON RIVER.** Chairman Gibbs clarified that the only season under consideration is the South Fork Salmon River. Commissioner Watts withdrew the motion and Commissioner Hadley withdrew her second.

05-42 Commissioner Power moved and Commissioner Wheeler seconded **TO ACCEPT STAFF RECOMMENDATION TO OPEN THE SEASON JUNE 17 UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE AND INFORM THE PUBLIC THAT IT IS UNLIKELY THE SEASON WILL GO MUCH PAST JULY 4.** The motion carried unanimously.

The Director clarified that he has the authority to close a season for biological purposes. The Commission is the only entity that can open a season.

Commissioner Wheeler asked for update on GTECH at the June 29 meeting including background information and history. The Director indicated he will prepare an update for June 29 and that GTECH has been asked to give a full report at the July meeting.

The July meeting will also include a tour of the Sawtooth hatchery, a Fisheries update, and an update on the Sawtooth National Recreation Area.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 a.m.